

Newington– Notes – Summary for Town Manager (TM) Search based on Meetings with some Stakeholders

Public Meetings for citizens were held on May 3 & May 18. Meetings were also held with the Department Heads on May 20, to provide input to the Town Council for their discussion for the Town Manager Search Process

Qualifications -Education and Experience

- Preference for internal recruitment & internal candidate
- Preference for full national search
- Person with previous Town Manager type experience
- Degree in Public or Business Administration – MPA/MBA
- Knowledge of State & Federal grants
- Knowledge & Experience with Labor Relations & Union Negotiations
- Understanding the type of issues facing Newington
- Understand the role of the Town Manager and responsibilities
- Economic Development experience
- Good at Council relationships
- Experience with old infrastructure improvements and/or building renovations
- Strong Budget & Finance experience

Management and Leadership Style

- Ability to hit the ground running
- Ability to manage within budget approved by council
- Transparency of government issues
- Committed to handle tough issues like health benefit cost & pension costs (pension underfunding)
- Ability to listen impartially – everyone has a right to a voice – need to listen to citizens respectfully
- Effective relations with Council – council are policy makers – important to carry out the will of the council
- Council steers the ship and the manager handles the day to day implementation
- Supportive of staff
- Continue fairness in hiring practices – promote organizational development and diversity
- Want a commitment of 5-10 years to accomplish the projects on the table
- People person
- Excellent managing skills
- Is respectful in communication skills even if they have to say no
- Need for creativity – new ideas
- Collaborative – hear from all stakeholders - also get departments to work together or to continue to work together
- Not a micro manager
- Complete honesty – straight talker – integrity – accountability – good sense of humor – versatile

- Serves at the pleasure of the whole council not just the majority or a small group – provide information to all council members not just a few
- Look at regionalization and sharing of resources
- Accountability about projects – open to all views
- Honesty & Integrity
- Has the ability to take the long term view
- Team building – more communication with department heads to keep them all informed
- Active community person – be out in the community for programs
- Open door policy
- No initial judgement of complaints till they have heard both sides of the issue
- Need to communicate new projects so all departments can provide input on impact to organization

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- Good listener – Good Communicator in writing and speaking with citizens, staff and Council and other stakeholders
- Ability to build a responsible budget
- Strong Labor Relations Skills – contract negotiations and handling of grievances
- Ability to find and work with grants for many programs
- Familiar with FOI
- Technology savvy
- Great interpersonal skills
- Proven communication skills and public speaking skills & writing skills
- Understand the bonding process for projects
- Management and Administration skills
- Construction Management Project skills or experience since there are a number of facility projects and parks projects on the horizon
- Prefer wisdom over resume – Show ability to handle difficult issues
- Responsive to citizens and calls them back
- Good at multi-tasking – 17 issues handled before lunch
- Good bedside manner
- Have to be able to deal with personnel issues (within union and nonunion environment)
- Supportive of Department heads and their services– make decisions when needed but not a micro manager

Expectations for New Town Manager – Information about Town Operations & demographics

- No HR Director – TM serves as HR Dir - needs to be able to handle with TM Staff (AA & Benefits coordinator & labor attorney)
- Town has promoted open space
- Continue the idea of newsletter to community – not just on website
- Some tension between BOE & Town Council – Some politics – need to get everyone to work together
- Need to know issues around the new bus way
- Will need to sell bonding issues for infrastructure projects to the public
- Past 10 years Council has had ability to go directly to Department heads – before that it was not allowed – will be hard to go back
- Continue the good cooperative relationship with the Superintendent that had happened in the last 10 years
- Potential for regionalization of the Dispatch function
- Position is key to the community to move forward
- Need for more senior and affordable housing
- Shared services with BOE – especially since all employees other than management and police are in one union for Town & BOE employees; office supplies purchased together; both purchase off the CRCOG Purchasing Council list; Finance manages Town & BOE grant funds, etc.
- Town bond rating was just improved to AA+, good financial condition, OPEB funded at 100%, lowest debt budget in the state about \$7 mil
- Manager needs to know that the revaluation bills will be going out this year and so there will be a lot of appeals to the courts related to assessed value
- 99% Tax Collection Rate – great – citizens want opportunity for better on-line and credit card payment methods for taxes in the future
- Town has own facilities department which includes trades people and custodians
- Water & Sewer provided by MDC – Regional agency
- Health District shared with Wethersfield, Rocky Hill & Berlin
- Animal Control shared with Wethersfield
- Great department heads – dedicated and professional – Pride in Public Service attitude – Manager needs to lead on this issue
- Active P&R program – 8000 people registered for programs, 10,000 visits to pools in 8 weeks, 13,000 use parks and picnic areas
- Town staff can design, estimate and construct road & drainage projects
- TM office staff handle – HR, Benefits, Purchasing, Building Committees, Grants, Council Meetings, legal issues, resident issues
- Ability to get a consensus with the Council and develop goals for the department heads to get things done
- Human Services includes youth bureau and youth and family counseling in addition to other services – major focus on Hoarding issues & how to handle mental health issues – training of HS & Police – Crisis Intervention Team
- Need for better space for Food Bank

- Police doing more community outreach – citizen academy, youth academy, police community forum – more education of the public – New Police Chief
- Newington has one of the largest senior populations in the State – the issue of the changing needs of the new baby boomers requires new ideas for services.

Issues & Opportunities

- Many infrastructure projects – i.e. Town Hall Renovations (more open process than in the past). Need to improve town facilities – upcoming projects include – Town Hall, Elementary School, Library, Park improvements – Church Hill, possible expansion to Fire Houses – Town Manager needs to be more involved in all these building committee projects
- Community is built out – not a lot of land left for new development
- Need for new ideas in economic development
- Ambulance Contract up for renewal
- Golf Course – leased out to private firm but Town owns the land – unique lease needs to be reviewed
- Traffic Congestion in Town Center
- Improvements to the old facades in Town Center
- Need for more growth of grand list which needs to be done through redevelopment or repurposing of existing properties since the town is built out – how to re-energize the economic development
- Opportunity to look at Transit oriented development around the Fast Track sites
- Town Hall renovations or replacement process has gone through one referendum, one committee and is in third process – TM needs to participate and lead these efforts
- Recent budget process between Town & BOE & Council were contentious
- Building facilities are very old and require a lot of maintenance and renovations
- Parks lack proper upkeep of the infrastructure – such as pools that are crumbling & fields and ADA accessibility – lack of resources and staff to maintain large program
- Blight enforcement handled in TM office then given to Zoning Enforcement Officer – has increased in recent years
- No Public Works Director – TM serves in this capacity and therefore has to work with various departments on a regular basis to coordinate efforts of appropriate departments
- Increased requirement for Stormwater means additional costs in the future
- Ability to promote forward progress
- Growing issues with mobile devices and use of the cloud in IT operations will mean additional costs to set up systems and security
- Need to update the website

Positives about Community

- Active group of citizens
- Town endorses the Town Manager/Town Council form of government
- Town has great services – a few mentioned were Senior Services, Police, leaf pick up, trash pickup is part of taxes, good snow removal, great P&R programs, good education at schools, etc.
- Is a family friendly town
- Location close to State Capitol and Hartford Entertainments
- Berlin Turnpike brings in a lot of visitors for retail shopping and restaurants (but also traffic)
- Good mix of commercial and residential for tax base – new retail/commercial facility being added to Berlin Turnpike
- Very Caring community and citizens
- Lots of volunteer organizations in Town – including 120 fire department volunteers and ambulance volunteers
- No neighborhoods competing – one town
- Opportunities with new Bus Way to Hartford